

JESUS CHRIST'S IDIOM**NO. 3053****A SERMON****PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 1907****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 19, 1873***“Jesus answered, Verily, verily.”**John 3:5*

THIS expression, “Verily, verily,” seems to me to have been the peculiar idiom of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has absolutely forbidden His people ever to take an oath. [Mr. Spurgeon has written at length upon this subject in pages 29, 207, and 208 of *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, the “*Popular Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*” upon which he was occupied at Mentone, almost up to the time that the Lord called him home to heaven]

His command upon that matter is most explicit, “I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King: neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

My text was Jesus Christ’s strongest form of affirmation—when He wished to speak most emphatically, He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” Every prominent public speaker has his own peculiar idioms, and very much of the man’s character will be found in the idioms that he uses. And I may add that the attention which the man deserves may sometimes be gauged by his idioms, for as his style of speaking will reveal to you the man, you will discover how far you ought to lend him your ears.

If, from his speech, you judge that he is flippant, or insincere, or that there is something sinister in his motives, or that he is aiming at the display of himself rather than at the proclamation of the truth, you may straightway say, “Then there is no particular reason why I should listen to him.” But if, from the very idiomatic force of the words which he uses, you feel that the man is true, sincere, and earnest, then you say, “I shall be wise to give heed to his words and to let his thoughts operate upon my own.”

There are three qualities which these words reveal to us in our Savior’s teaching. First, there was *clearness*—“Verily, verily.” Secondly, there was *certainty*—“Verily, verily, I say this and that unto you.” Thirdly, there was *solemnity*—“Verily, verily, I say unto you.” We must, therefore give to Him, in return for clearness, the desire to understand Him. In return for certainty, the conviction of the truth of what He says, and to His solemnity, we must respond with a deep sense of the importance of His teaching, and act in accordance with what He says.

I. I am to speak, first, upon Christ’s idiom, “Verily, verily,” as denoting to US THE CLEARNESS OF WHAT THE SAVIOR SAID.

He knew what He meant when He spoke. Some people, when they speak, do not know what they mean, and when a man does not make you understand what he means, it generally is because he does not know the meaning of what he says. Indistinct speaking is usually the result of indistinct thinking. If men think clouds, they will preach clouds, but the Savior never spoke in that style which, at one time, was so common in our pulpits—a style imported partly from Germany, and which was excessively cloudy and smoky, though it was thought by some people to be wonderfully profound and to be the very trademark of intellect.

But there was not a sentence of that kind in all Christ’s teaching. *He was the clearest, most straightforward, and most outspoken of all speakers.* He knew what He meant to say and He meant His hearers also to know. It is true that the Jews of His day did not comprehend some of His teaching, but

that was because judicial blindness had fallen upon them. The fault was not in the light, but in their bleared eyes.

Turn to His teaching and see if anyone else ever spoke as simply as He did. A child can comprehend His parables. [See *Sermons on our Lord's Parables*, delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and New Park Street Chapel, by C. H. Spurgeon. This volume contains 65 sermons] There are, in them, hidden truths which are a mystery even to Christ's deeply-taught disciples, but Christ never mystified His hearers—He talked to them like a child, as He was—God's "holy child Jesus." He never laid aside the simplicity of childhood, though He had all the dignity of fully-developed manhood. He wore His heart upon His sleeve and spoke out what was on His mind in such plain, clear language that the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low were eager to listen to Him.

Now, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, *if you wish to imitate your Master, speak with the same clearness*. Say to your hearers, "Verily, verily, I have to proclaim to you, in Christ's name, this simple yet sublime truth, which I have myself grasped, and which I would also have you grasp." Never affect profundity amongst the poor and never use a theological jargon amongst the uneducated anywhere.

If you have, in speaking, to show the Savior to your hearers, show Him in His own dress—do not cover Him up with the tawdry vestments of your gaudy language, for He will count them only as filthy rags. Tell sinners, in simple words, first about their sins and then about the Savior who can wash away their sins in His most precious blood. But go not a-hunting after novelties, for they will be of no service to perishing souls. If you are to be like Jesus, your teaching must be clear.

But next I want to say to those of you who are still unconverted, *how needful it is that you should clearly understand this clear teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ!* There are some truths upon which He spoke with very wonderful clearness—as for instance, concerning what sin is—how a look may be a sin and how a longing may be as much a sin as an action or a word is. Christ has also told us very clearly that sin must and will be punished.

There never was anyone else so kind in heart as He was, yet He clearly taught the dreadful truth that sinners shall be punished in hell forever. There never can be any question about the Savior's view of sin as being a very evil thing and of the punishment of sin as being a very terrible thing.

How very plainly, too, He speaks about the new birth! He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And He was equally explicit concerning the way of salvation. He tells us that, just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and every bitten Israelite who looked to it was healed, so He Himself was lifted up upon the cross, and every sinner who trusts Him is saved forever.

The teachings of Christ and of His apostles, concerning sinners being saved through faith in Him, are blessedly clear. The Gospels and epistles tell us that a perfectly holy and divine Substitute for sinners was required—and that Jesus was that Substitute and stood in the place of all His chosen people—and bore the punishment which was due for all their sins. If we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, all our liabilities to infinite justice are forever discharged, for Jesus bore all our sins in His own body on the tree—and bore them so completely away that they shall be remembered against us no more forever.

I want to ask you, who have not yet believed in Jesus, whether you really understand this truth of which I have been speaking. Lest there should be anyone here under a delusion upon this matter, let me say, once for all, that *there is no salvation in any charm or ceremony invented or performed by men*. The common notion is, that there is some kind of charm which operates upon a person, young or old, who is brought to a font—that some virtue or other goes through the fingers of the "priest" who sprinkles the water, because at his "ordination" he received something or other, from somebody or other, who received that something or other from some other body, and so on, and so on, and so on right up to the apostles!

All that is sheer superstition as base as the witchcraft for which old women were burned in the evil days of the past. [See sermons #581, *Children Brought to Christ, Not to The Font* and #573, *Baptismal Regeneration*—the sermon by Mr. Spurgeon which has had a larger circulation than any other in the whole series, and the one which, in these

days of openly-avowed or partly-concealed Romanism, is needed as much as any of the other 3,052 discourses] How I wish that all men, and women, and children could be undeceived concerning it!

Then there is a notion that a piece of bread, or a drop of wine, “consecrated” and dispensed by properly-authorized persons, will, somehow or other, charm away evil from a person dying. That is another superstition not a whit better than the fetish of the pretended rainmakers of South Africa. Neither the water, nor the bread and wine can convey grace to an unbeliever.

But if I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, my being buried with Him in baptism [See sermon #1627, Baptism—A Burial] reminds me that I am saved through His death and burial—and if I, as a believer in Christ, eat the bread and drink the wine at the communion table, those suggestive symbols help me, as Paul says, to “show the Lord’s death till he come.” [One of the choicest volumes published since Mr. Spurgeon’s home-going is that entitled *Till He Come*—containing 21 communion meditations and addresses] That is all. There is no charm in the water, or the bread, or the wine in themselves whatever incantations any so-called “priest” may have muttered over them.

Then, *never imagine that we cannot understand what the Gospel of Christ really is*. Someone perhaps says, “Well, you see, sir, I am not learned. I am no scholar, so I cannot understand the Gospel.” My dear friend, there are many people who cannot understand the Gospel just because they *are* scholars. They know too much to understand it—they have so much of what they think is knowledge that they are prejudiced against it. Knowledge may prejudice a person as much as ignorance does.

What you need to know is simply this—that you are a sinner and that if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He is your Savior. The result of believing in Him will be this—knowing that you are saved because God tells you that you are, you love God whom you dreaded before, and loving Him, you naturally ask, “What can I do to please Him?”

So you give up your old sins, and led on by the impulse of love, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, you seek after holiness. The things that concern your soul’s salvation are plain enough for a child to comprehend. If you are lost, it will not be a mystery that damns you—and if you are ever to be saved, it is the simplicity of the Gospel that will save you. The truths that relate to your ruin through sin—and the only remedy for that ruin—through the grace of God, are “as plain as a pikestaff,” as our common proverb puts it.

“Still,” says one, “I have often listened to the preaching of the Gospel, but I have failed to understand it.” Then, ask the Spirit of God to guide you into it. He is waiting to instruct sincere seekers. Let me ask you whether you have ever really tried to understand the Gospel. “Well, sir, I have heard Dr. So-and-So and Mr. So-and-So.” Yes, but perhaps they have only muddled you.

Have you read the Bible itself? He who wishes to drink pure water had better go to the wellhead. He who wishes to find the truth of God had better come to these sacred pages, for here he will find it pure and unalloyed. Have you imitated the Jews at Berea who “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so”? There are many people who condemn the Scriptures, but no man who has read them in the right spirit ever condemns them.

You may remember the story of the City Missionary who was arguing with a cobbler—a man who thought himself a very wise skeptic although he had never read the Bible. He said he never would do so, yet he knew it was a very bad book! So the missionary said to him, “I bought a pair of boots yesterday, which cost me twelve and sixpence—do you think they were worth the money?” He replied, “Possibly they were, but I can’t say positively without seeing them.”

The missionary said, “But if you are a cobbler and understand your business, you can certainly tell me their value without seeing them.” “Why you must consider me a fool to think that I can judge of a thing I never saw.” “Yes,” said the missionary, “I *did* think you were a fool, because you have been judging and condemning the Bible which you have never studied.”

So I ask you, dear friend—Have you read the Bible? Have you studied it? If you say that you cannot comprehend it, I ask—Have you ever tried to do so? Do not plead that you cannot understand the Gospel

if you have never tried to understand it. But if you humbly ask the Holy Spirit to teach you its meaning as you read it, I believe the light of truth will soon enter your soul.

Let me ask you another question—Have you put into practice what you really *do* understand of the Scriptures? You know that you are sinful—have you confessed your sinfulness to God? You know that there is a Savior from sin and that He is to be laid hold of by faith—have you trusted Him to save you? With the truth so clear, there is no need for you to perish in the dark.

I read in the paper, yesterday, the notice of a reward to be given to anyone who would furnish information concerning the injury done to a certain buoy off the coast. The buoy was described as being on such and such a sand, and as it was twenty feet in height, it must have been injured through sheer carelessness or willful wickedness.

So, if you have rightly read the Scriptures, or have heard the Gospel plainly preached, it will be impossible for you to perish by accident—you will perish willfully and your blood will be upon your own head. When Christ brings the printed Gospel before your eyes, as it were, in capital letters—if you will not read it and understand it—you must perish as a spiritual suicide, which may God forbid!

II. The time flies so quickly that I must pass on to notice, in the next place, that THE EXPRESSION, “VERILY, VERILY,” AS THE SPECIAL IDIOM OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, SIGNIFIED CERTAINTY.

He knew that what He said was true and therefore He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” Untold mischief has been done in our country by the kind of preaching which was very common at one time, namely, for the preacher to speak as if he did not know what the truth is and must be pardoned for intruding his opinions!

If a man does not know the truth, let him hold his tongue until he does. “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” said the psalmist. And he alone has the right to speak who speaks that which he believes and therefore knows. The Lord Jesus never hesitates as to what He shall say, His language never halts. His “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” is the utterance of one who knows the truth and who speaks it as one who is assured that it is the truth.

On our part, there should be a suitable response to Christ's certainty. If we believe Him to be the Son of God, speaking the truth to us with absolute certainty, let us receive with certainty what He says to us. “But” says one, “there are so many different opinions that I do not know which to believe.” What have you to do with men's opinions?

Supposing there are ten thousand “isms” in the world—what have they to do with you? If you are lost, it will not abate the flames of hell if you say, “There were so many isms in the world I did not know which to choose.” There was but one truth, for Christ said, “I am the truth.” If you had believed Him, you would have been saved by Him.

There are, today, many persons who raise all sorts of questions—there always have been and there always will be such persons while this dispensation lasts—but what have you to do with them? Your business is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and leave all those questions alone.

“But” says another, “even good men differ.” I know they do, but if you go into a watchmaker's shop, you find that even good watches and clocks differ in some respects. Yet that fact does not affect Greenwich mean time, which is the standard for all the watches and clocks in the country.

So, supposing that one good man sees one side of a truth and another sees another side of it—what good man ever asks you to trust in him? You have listened to my preaching—some of you for many years—did I ever ask you to follow my guidance except just so far as the Scriptures prove the truth of what I preach to you? With God's Word in your hand as the map of the road to heaven, ask His Spirit to guide you and He will guide you all the way.

All that Christ teaches is certainly true and *there are some things which He tells us which are absolutely essential for us to learn.* For instance, “Ye must be born again.” Or this, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” There is no doubt that, at the last great day, Christ “will judge the world in

righteousness.” We must all stand before His great white throne to receive from Him the final sentence which shall fix our eternal destiny.

If you are an unbeliever, you are condemned already—and if you live and die an unbeliever, you must be driven from His presence into a hopeless eternity. All these things are certainties. There are many fictions in the world, but these things are not fictions—neither are they trifles. And I do pray you to believe these truths and to draw the right practical inferences from them.

There are also some truths about which Christ says, “Verily, verily,” *which ought to be a great comfort to you.* For instance, it is certainly true that if you confess your sins to Him, He will forgive you. It is certainly true that if you trust in Jesus, He will give you rest and peace, and you shall be “accepted in the beloved.”

It is certainly true that if you commit your soul into Christ's hands, you shall never perish, and no one shall ever be able to pluck you out of His hands. [See sermons #726, Life Eternal and #2120, The Security of Believers—Or, Sheep Who Shall Never Perish] There are many blessed assurances in the Word of God upon which you may surely rely. God help you to rely upon them now!

There are other truths in God's Word, which you will find to be sure if you test and try them. I might address myself to many a man here and say to him, “Brother, did you not put Christ's Word to the test in the time of trouble, and did you not prove it to be true?” And I know that the answer would be, “Ay, that I did.”

I might pick out many a humble man and woman here, who have had a heavy task to bring up their children as they have done, and many stern struggles with poverty and affliction, and I might say to them, “My brother, my sister, has not Christ been precious to you?” And I know that the answer would be, “Ay! That He has! He has fulfilled every word of promise that He ever gave us to rely upon.”

There is no one who can ever convict Christ of a falsehood—there is not a friend or a foe who can truthfully say, “He deceived me.” “Verily, verily,” is stamped upon every promise, every precept, and every threatening—and He will prove all of them to be true to the end of time, and throughout eternity.

Then, *as these things are certain, let us act upon them.* O sirs, in a short time we shall have done with preaching and hearing the Gospel! I fear that many people come to our places of worship in the same spirit in which they go to places of amusement, and that the main things of which they think are—how the preacher puts his message, whether he is fluent and eloquent, and whether he interests them or not.

Ay, but that is not the principal matter about which we should be concerned. You and I will soon be before the bar of God, and I shall have to prove that I faithfully preached what I believed to be the truth of God—and you will have to prove whether you accepted it and acted upon it. And I charge you all, before the living God, at whose bar you must soon stand, not to treat the Gospel as if it were mere fiction.

Go not away from this building as though you had been watching a play, or listening to an organ recital which might or might not signify anything to you. There is a real hell—will you be shut up in it forever? There is a real heaven—will you be shut out of it forever? There is a real Savior who died upon the cross for sinners—will you despise and reject Him?

And above all, there sits a real God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being—shall we continue to forget Him, break His laws as if we had liberty to do what we would, and despise Him as if He were a man like ourselves? Oh, by the “Verily, verily,” of the Christ of God, I do beseech you to lay to heart the certainty, the reality of His teachings, and let them have their due weight upon your spirits! May the Spirit of God make it to be so!

III. The third point was to be that CHRIST'S “VERILY, VERILY” MEANT SOLEMNITY.

Christ was a very solemn preacher, though He was by no means a dull preacher. There are some speakers who confound dullness with solemnity, but Christ's discourses were always interesting. How He abounded in parables and metaphors! The children listened with pleasure to His teachings, yet how

solemn it always was, and how forcibly the Master proved the solemnity of His speech by the solemnity of His life!

Those nights of prayer, that He spent on the lone mountainside, show that His was no mock earnestness. And that life of untiring labor showed how real and intense was His zeal. And His death, as with blood-red seals, proved that, "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." It was the same Christ who said, "Verily, verily," who died upon the cross, and rose again, and went up into glory to make intercession for the transgressors.

The solemnity of Christ's words and work should cause us to listen to His Gospel with a corresponding seriousness and solemnity. If you are worldly and earth-bound, you will not attach that importance to the Gospel of Christ that you should. To many of you, the truth that you need to be saved does not seem to come home with power. If I were, in the middle of a sermon, to begin to talk about the way to get money, the attention of many of you would be far more intense than it is when I am speaking about the salvation of immortal souls.

If I were to discuss the price of British Consols, many ears would be at once opened to catch every syllable. Whereas, when I talk of the incalculable price that Jesus paid for the redemption of the souls of men, the truth makes no more impression upon many men's minds than oil would upon a slab of marble. Your souls, the best part of your real selves, concern you not, O you foolish sons of men! You treat your souls as if they were dirt, yet you prize the things of time and sense as if they were all that you had.

You have a notion that these things concern people a long way off—people who are very wicked and do not go to any place of worship, or other people in this congregation who are somehow more fitted than you are to receive my message. But sir, the Gospel is *for you*, and God is speaking by His Word and by His servant, *to you*. I wish that you would end this folly of passing on to others the Gospel that is meant for yourself.

In closing, I must just mention one or two reflections concerning the solemnity of the Gospel message. First, remember that *the Gospel concerns our never-dying souls*. Most people think a great deal about that which concerns the body. There is much talk about an operation, wisely performed by an eminent surgeon upon the poor body which must soon become food for worms.

Yet little or nothing is said about the soul, which is so vastly more precious. The soul of an emperor or the soul of a beggar is of the same value in God's sight. "Whither does it take its flight when its earthly cage is broken?" Is that a question which is never asked by some of you? If so, what arrant fools you must be! O blessed Spirit of God, teach us the solemnity of the Gospel which concerns the soul which must live forever in raptures or in woe!

This Gospel also concerns the never-ending eternity. We are not going into another time-state that shall come to an end, but into that eternity which shall know no close. I can make no meaning out of Christ's words if it be not so—and He said, concerning the wicked, "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment; but the righteous into life *eternal*." The word is the same in each case in the original.

Oh, eternity, eternity, eternity, who can conceive what it is? A million millions of years would be less than a moment compared with eternity—and that sum multiplied by a million millions a million times told would be but as a drop in a bucket compared with that which is everlasting. O sirs, as I know that I am to live forever in such a state as I shall die in, my first concern is to be ready for death that I may be ready for my eternal future! Is it not so with you also?

Oh, I do implore you, trifle not with eternity and with your never-dying souls! Trifle not with the God who can cast you into hell forever. Trifle not with Christ, whose hands and feet were nailed to the accursed tree for sinners such as you. Trifle not with His precious blood, for that is your only hope of redemption. Trifle not with the Holy Spirit, for if He should leave you to perish, your case would be hopeless.

Trifle not with your Sabbaths—you will wish to have them back again when you are near death. Trifle not with the Gospel—what would the lost in hell not give to hear another proclamation of mercy?

The devil does not trifle—he is very earnestly seeking your destruction. God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit are not trifling with you—and we are not trifling with you.

We long to preach the Gospel to you more earnestly, more fully, and more faithfully than ever—and we pray to God to help us do so and lament when we fear that we have failed. Trifle not when everything around you seems to be in earnest, and especially when the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking out of this chapter, says to you, “Verily, verily, I of the thorn-crown, I of the pierced hands and feet, speak plainly, certainly, and solemnly to you, and bid you look unto Me, that you may be saved.”

I never go out of this pulpit feeling so utterly cast down as when I have been trying to deal with the consciences of the ungodly. I wish I could grip each one of you by the hand and look you in the face, and say, “Man, woman, are you going to die without a Savior? Oh, be not so foolish, so mad!” I would tell every young man here how, when I was myself a young man, I was led to look by faith to the Savior and I have found it a blessed thing to rest in Him ever since. And I would say to him, “Brother, come with me to the cross of Calvary, and rest in Jesus, and begin to live a holy and useful life—and you shall find yourself truly blessed among men.”

I cannot come round and speak personally to you all, but will you let me follow you to your bedside, and if you think of getting into bed tonight without a prayer for your soul's salvation, just imagine that you feel my hand upon your shoulder and hear me say to you, “What! No offering of a prayer to God?” I was about to say, “Stepping into your bed,” but I bethought me that it might become your sepulcher, for you may die there. As many have done who went to bed as thoughtlessly and prayerlessly as you have often done. But if you trust in Jesus, and then fall asleep for the last time on earth, you will wake up amid the splendors of eternal bliss.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 3:1-18

If we were asked to read to a dying man who did not know the Gospel, we should probably select this chapter as the most suitable one for such an occasion. And what is good for dying men is good for us all, for that is what we are—and how soon we may actually be at the gates of death, none of us can tell.

Verses 1-2. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night,*

We do not know the names of many other Pharisees, but we do know the name of this one because God had loved him with an everlasting love and therefore with lovingkindness did He draw him to the Savior's feet. “The same came to Jesus by night.”

Possibly he was too busy to come during the day. Anyhow, it was better to come to Jesus late at night than not to come to Him at all. From the fact that after our Lord's death, it is said that he was the man who “at the first came to Jesus by night,” I gather that he did come then partly out of timidity and partly also out of candor. He wanted to know more about Christ before he committed himself, so he came privately, to see and hear for himself. It does not matter if any of you also come to Christ by night if you like. Our Savior has a night-bell to His door and He is quite willing to be the Physician of your soul—even if you ring Him up at midnight.

2. *And said unto him, Rabbi,*

He begins very respectfully, and so far, so good. But then, Judas said, “Hail, Master,” and kissed Christ, when he went to Gethsemane to betray Him.

2. *We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

Dear friends, if any of you do not know all about Christ that you wish to know, or that can be known, make use of what you do know about Him. Nicodemus had not yet learned the truth of Christ's deity, but he knew that He was a teacher sent from God and that God was with Him.

3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* [See sermon #130, Regeneration]

Christ's formula, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," was a new style of speech for the Pharisees to hear, for they quoted Rabbi this, and Rabbi that—but Jesus gives Himself as His own sufficient authority, with an egoism which cannot be blamed, and which no true disciple of His ever questions, for Christ is Himself the truth, and whatever He says is to be humbly received by all His followers.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He has no notion of what it really is. He cannot even see it, for he is blind to it until he is born again. It is for this reason that our most lucid explanations of the Gospel are altogether lost upon unregenerate men and women. However bright a light God may make our ministry to be, bright light is of no use to blind men, and they must be born again before they can even see the kingdom of God.

4. *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

His questions proved that he could not see the kingdom of God. He blundered over the letter of Christ's message. He misunderstood the metaphor that Christ used—but did Jesus therefore not give Nicodemus any further instruction? Oh, no. Listen.

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

There must be a purifying operation upon his heart and mind, he must be spiritually washed and cleansed, and the Spirit of God must create him anew. Otherwise he cannot possibly enter into the kingdom of God.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

So that the best child who ever was born, even though he were, like Saul of Tarsus, "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews," yet even he, inasmuch as he "is born of the flesh, is flesh," and not "spirit." Everything which comes to us by our first birth can be nothing better than flesh—and what can you get out of flesh but flesh? The only "evolution" that can come of the flesh is corruption.

There must be another birth if you are to get anything but flesh—"that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Fleshly things are understood by the flesh, and spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. Hence the absolute necessity of a second birth, a Spirit birth, that we may first see and then enter the spiritual kingdom of God.

7. *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.* [See sermon #1454, Every Man's Necessity]

This ruler of the Jews was full of astonishment at this strange doctrine, so Christ said to him, "Marvel not."

8. *The wind bloweth—*

That is, the Spirit blows.

8. *Where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* [See sermon #1356, The Heavenly Wind]

This is a great mystery and our Savior connected it with the most mysterious thing in the whole realm of nature—the wind—a thing which has never been seen and which must remain a mystery to us, at least while we are upon the earth. Christ uses this mysterious force as an emblem of the Holy Spirit and of those who are "born of the Spirit."

9. *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?*

He was puzzled and perplexed, like a man in a maze. The Savior had given him something to think of—and I wish that when we preach to a congregation, or when we talk to individuals, we would not aim at dazzling them with our fine phrases, but would seek to set the truth before their minds, that it

might lie there to be studied, and thought of, and to be like seed which, in later days, would germinate, and bring forth a harvest to God's praise and glory.

Our Savior is an example to all of us who preach, and in this instance, He shows us the wisdom of not keeping back the mysteries of the kingdom. I am greatly afraid that many preachers would have begun by talking to Nicodemus of some point that was common to both Judaism and Christianity, and that they would have gone on to apologize for the peculiar mysteries of Christianity, all of which would have been a waste of breath and worse than that. Do not so, my brethren, but speak out the truth boldly, and leave the Eternal Spirit to make use of it as He pleases.

10-12. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

The Savior as good as told Nicodemus that He did not come to argue or to reason with him, but to bear witness to absolute certainties, of which He Himself was absolutely sure. So He said to him, "If you do not receive our witness concerning these things, which lie on the very threshold of the kingdom"—yet, mark you, He had been speaking about regeneration, the great mystery of the new birth—"it is of no use going on to still higher themes." So it is evident that the kingdom of Christ requires great faith—faith on the very threshold of it—to believe the wondrous mystery of the new birth and still greater faith as deeper truths, the more heavenly things of the kingdom are revealed to us.

13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

Now Nicodemus must have been indeed puzzled. Here was a man who had come down from heaven, yet who had gone up to heaven, and was still there, although He was at that moment talking to Nicodemus! Without the Spirit of God to explain the mystery, he could not make top or bottom of it.

14-15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* [See sermon #153, The Mysteries of The Brazen Serpent]

Mark, dear friends, the blending of the different truths in this wonderful chapter. There is no keeping back the necessity of the new birth and there is no cutting down of the glorious doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus. He puts the whole matter as broadly as it could be put.

16-17. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

If any one of you says, "I cannot cause myself to be born again," that is quite true. Yet listen to this message in the same chapter which speaks of the new birth—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

18. *He that believeth on him is not condemned.* [See sermons #361, None But Jesus—First Part and #362, None But Jesus—Second Part]

That is a grand truth.

18. *But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

His not believing is the master-sin, the surest evidence of his being, in his heart, an enemy to God. If he refuses to trust Christ, the matchless gift of the Father's love, he must be desperately set on mischief, and he "is condemned already."

These two truths of the necessity of the new birth and of the fact that everyone who believes on Christ is saved, are quite consistent and in perfect harmony with each other. God grant to us the grace to know them both by experience! Never talk about "reconciling" them, for they have never fallen out with one another. God grant that we may find them both true in our own lives, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.